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**Review and implementation of the Concluding Document of the Twelfth Special Session of the General Assembly: United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa**

# United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa

## Report of the Secretary-General

*Summary*

The Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa has, over the past six years, experienced considerable financial difficulties owing to the lack of voluntary contributions to finance its operational and administrative costs. It had been operating without a Director since July 1992. In 1998, the Secretary-General, pursuant to the request of the General Assembly in its resolution 52/220 of 22 December 1997, appointed a new Director as a first step towards the revitalization of the Centre. Following the assumption of his functions in December 1998, the Director undertook vigorous fund-raising efforts and drew up a programme of activities for the Centre which was endorsed by the Group of African States at the United Nations.

During the period under review, the Centre provided support for the implementation and realization of peace and security-related activities undertaken by African Governments. This included the process of the destruction of weapons in Liberia, observance of the peace talks between the Government of Sierra Leone and the Revolutionary United Front which culminated in the signing of a Peace Agreement on 7 July 1999 under the aegis of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Serving as the operational and policy framework for the Programme for Coordination and Assistance for Security and Development, the Centre has been providing support for the implementation of the Moratorium on the Importation, Exportation and Manufacture of Small Arms and Light Weapons in West Africa (see A/53/179, annex I). The Centre also participated in several

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conferences and seminars, including the thirty-fifth ordinary session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity, held at Algiers. It assisted in the organization of the activities of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa. It also assisted the Department for Disarmament Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat in organizing a workshop for the African region on the question of illicit trafficking in small arms, held at Lomé. It coordinated relevant peace and disarmament activities and efforts of civil society organizations and research institutions.

While a number of Member States have made financial pledges in support of the implementation of its work programme, the Centre continues to experience financial and operational difficulties which impair its full functioning. The Secretary-General wishes to thank those Member States which have made contributions to the Centre and reiterates his appeal to Member States, as well as to intergovernmental organizations and foundations, to make voluntary contributions to revitalize the Centre, strengthen its programmes of activities and facilitate the implementation of those programmes.

# I. Introduction

1. The present report, covering the period July 1998–August 1999, is submitted in pursuance of General Assembly resolution 53/78 C of 4 December 1998, by which the Assembly, *inter alia*, requested the Secretary-General to report to it at its fifty-fourth session on the activities of the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa. It is also submitted in pursuance of Assembly resolution 53/78 F of 4 December 1998, entitled "United Nations regional centres for peace and disarmament", by which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to provide all necessary support, within existing resources, to the regional centres in carrying out their programmes of activities and to report to the Assembly at its fifty-fourth session on the implementation of the resolution.

# II. Functioning of the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa

2. The United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa was established in 1986, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 40/151 G of 16 December 1985. Its headquarters is located at Lomé. The Centre functions within the framework of the Department for Disarmament Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, which ensures supervision and acts as the focal point for coordinating the input of the pertinent organs, programmes and agencies of the United Nations system to the activities of the Centre.

3. The Centre functioned at a minimal operational scale and without a Director for over six years owing to insufficient financial resources. On 1 December 1998, the Secretary-General, pursuant to the request of the General Assembly in resolution 52/220, appointed a new Director for the Centre as a first step towards its revitalization. In February 1999, the Director presented to the Group of African States at the United Nations a programme of work for the revitalization process. The programme, which comprised the following priority areas, was discussed and endorsed by the Group: support to peace initiatives in Africa; arms limitation and disarmament; and information, research and publications.

# III. Objectives and activities of the Centre

4. The Centre continued to carry out its mandate, as contained in General Assembly resolution 40/151 G. According to its mandate, the Centre shall provide, upon request, substantive support for initiatives and other efforts of Member States of the African region towards the realization of measures of peace, arms limitation and disarmament in the region, in cooperation with the Organization of African Unity (OAU), as well as coordinate the implementation of regional activities in Africa under the United Nations Disarmament Information Programme.

5. During the period under review, the Centre, despite financial constraints, continued to fulfil its mandate as far as possible by contributing to efforts to promote wider understanding and cooperation among African States in the areas of peace, disarmament and security. In this connection, it expanded its contacts and cooperation with other relevant United Nations bodies, governmental and non-governmental organizations, and research and academic institutions.

6. The Centre continued to publish and distribute its quarterly bilingual publication, *African Peace Bulletin*, which focuses on relevant developments in the field of peace, security and disarmament and related issues, mainly in the African continent.

7. Within the framework of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa, the Centre assisted the Department for Disarmament Affairs in organizing a subregional seminar in Central Africa on the training of trainers in practical disarmament measures for the consolidation of peace. The seminar, designed for senior military and civilian officials, was held at Yaoundé, from 27 to 31 July 1998. It was financed from voluntary contributions from the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany. Both the Centre and the Bonn International Centre for Conversion provided substantive support to the seminar.

8. From 26 to 30 October 1998, the Centre also provided substantive and organizational support to the tenth ministerial meeting of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa, held at Yaoundé.

9. From 22 to 24 March 1999, the Centre, together with the office of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) at Bamako and the executive secretariat of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), convened the ministerial meeting to define the operational

modalities for the implementation of the Moratorium on the Importation, Exportation and Manufacture of Small Arms and Light Weapons in West Africa (see A/53/179, annex I) as contained in the implementing mechanism, the Programme for Coordination and Assistance for Security and Development. The participating Ministers adopted a plan of action for the Programme and a declaration condemning the growing phenomenon of child soldiers in the region. The plan of action comprised the following priority areas, with a view to controlling effectively the illicit flow of small arms in West Africa: enhancing the culture of peace; effective border controls; updating and harmonizing national legislation on the bearing of weapons by citizens; establishing a light weapons database and a register; organizing training programmes for law and order and security forces; establishing national commissions for the fight against the illicit flows of small arms; reinforcing the role of civil society organizations; establishing and maintaining a dialogue with arms manufacturers and suppliers; collecting and destroying surplus weapons where possible.

10. The Programme for Coordination and Assistance for Security and Development is a regional project of UNDP, executed by the United Nations Office for Project Services. The Centre serves as the operational and policy framework for the Programme. Various agencies and departments of the United Nations provide substantive contributions to the success of the work of the Programme, through the Centre. In coordination with the executive secretariat of ECOWAS, the Director of the Centre ensures the implementation of the Moratorium in the following areas: provision of technical advice for effective compliance; expansion of the objectives and ideals of the Moratorium to other interested African States; provision of policy and operational direction to the Programme; and provision of assistance for advocacy and resource mobilization.

11. In April, the Centre began work with the Ministry of Defence of Togo to assist in the establishment of a national commission on the control of the illicit flow of small arms in Togo, as recommended by the ECOWAS Council of Ministers at its meeting held from 22 to 24 March 1999. It also initiated contact in May with the Government of Chad with a view to implementing one of the practical recommendations of the Secretary-General's Advisory Mission on the Proliferation of Light Weapons in the Sahara-Sahel subregion, which took place in 1995.

12. On 5 May, the Centre organized at Geneva, in collaboration with the Norwegian Initiative on Small Arms Transfers and the Henri Dunant International Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, an international consultation to promote support for the West African Moratorium on light weapons and the Programme for Coordination and Assistance for Security and Development. The President of Mali, Alpha Konare, and the Executive Secretary of ECOWAS, Lansana Kouyaté, delivered the keynote addresses at the consultation. The Director of the Centre made a presentation on the Programme as a tool for practical disarmament.

13. From 24 to 25 May 1999, the Centre was associated in observing the ECOWAS ministerial discussion on the political situations which led to the *coups d'état* in the Niger on 9 April and in Guinea-Bissau on 6 May 1999.

14. On 25 May 1999, the Director of the Centre participated as an observer in the discussion by the seven-member ministerial committee of the peace process in Sierra Leone. The discussion preceded the opening of the talks between the Government of Sierra Leone and the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) of Foday Sankoh.

15. In June, the Centre continued to participate in the talks between the Government of Sierra Leone and RUF. The Centre participated in the committee on military affairs, in which it contributed to discussions on demobilization, disarmament and socio-economic reintegration of the ex-combatants and the restructuring of the armed and security forces. The peace agreement between the Government of Sierra Leone and RUF was finally signed on 7 July 1999.

16. On 10 June, the Director of the Centre, at the invitation of ECOWAS and the United Nations Peace-building Support Office in Liberia (UNOL), undertook a two-day mission in Monrovia together with the Executive Secretary of ECOWAS, following the announcement by the Government of Liberia that it would dispose of some 31,000 arms and about 2 million pieces of ammunition which had been collected during the peace process in that country in 1997. The aim of the mission was to examine, with the special cabinet committee established by the Government of Liberia, practical modalities for the disposal of the weapons, as well as to consider possible sources of funding. Several meetings were held at which the groundwork for the destruction process was established. It was agreed that the disposal would take place in two phases: the bulk of the weapons would be destroyed during the first phase which would last three weeks, beginning 10 June; the second phase would take place on 26 July, when a symbolic number of weapons would be set on fire in solemn commemoration of Liberian Independence Day (see also para. 21 below). It was also agreed that a technical team composed of representatives of the Government of Liberia, ECOWAS and the United Nations/Programme for Coordination and Assistance for

Security and Development be established. The Centre was mandated to draw up the certification which would be used by the United Nations and ECOWAS to authenticate the destruction of the weapons. The Director of the Centre was responsible for coordinating the work of the technical team, as had been agreed upon at the meeting on 10 June.

17. In June, the Centre initiated a three-phase project on the problem of child soldiers in Africa. The project document is being shared with the United Nations Children's Fund and the office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. The first phase of the project for which funding has been obtained, would involve case studies in the Sudan, Mozambique, Sierra Leone and Liberia.

18. Also in June, in the context of the Programme for Coordination and Assistance for Security and Development, the Centre initiated the assessment of the technical and operational needs for an African arms database, to be located at the Centre. The database will begin with West Africa where considerable political will has been demonstrated and where disarmament measures have been taken within the framework of the ECOWAS Moratorium. A workshop of experts will be held at Accra, on 23 and 24 September 1999, to define the operational modalities and nature and type of data involved. Participants in the workshop will include member States of ECOWAS, representatives of other interested Governments, representatives of OAU, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), and representatives of relevant research institutions and civil society organizations.

19. From 28 to 30 June, at the invitation of the Government of Switzerland, the Director of the Centre participated in a workshop in Baden, Switzerland, on the theme "Partnership for Peace: industrial aspects of small arms proliferation", where he made a presentation on the effects of small arms proliferation in Central Africa. The workshop was jointly organized by the Governments of Switzerland and Germany.

20. From 12 to 15 July, the Director of the Centre attended the thirty-fifth ordinary session of the Conference of Heads of State and Government of OAU at Algiers. The Conference discussed, among other matters, peace and security in Africa, highlighting the role of the Centre and stressing the need for it to be revitalized, including strengthening cooperation with OAU. The Conference provided an opportunity for the Director of the Centre to meet and discuss with several high-level African dignitaries issues related to the Centre and its role in the fields of peace, disarmament and security in Africa.

21. During July, the Centre, in collaboration with the United Nations Peace-building Support Office in Liberia, continued to follow up, with the Government of Liberia, the destruction of weapons collected during the peace process in the country. On 26 July, Liberian Independence Day, a weapons bonfire, symbolizing a "Flame of Hope" for the people of Liberia and containing 1,500 arms, was lit in Monrovia to publicly reaffirm Liberia's commitment to peace. The ceremonial destruction was attended by the Heads of State of Mali, Nigeria and Sierra Leone, by the Prime Ministers of Mauritania and Togo and by ministers from over a dozen other countries. The Centre is sponsoring the production of a video documentary of the entire operation, with the support of the Norwegian Initiative on Small Arms Transfers and UNDP.

22. Within this framework, the Centre organized, in cooperation with the United Nations Peace-building Support Office in Liberia, a one-day Liberian peace forum on 27 July, during which that country launched a peace education programme for schools and colleges.

23. The Centre also elaborated and is following up a project on the conversion of destroyed weapons into agricultural tools. The project is being executed by the Society for Technical Cooperation/Liberia, within the framework of activities of the Programme for Coordination and Assistance for Security and Development for post-conflict societies.

24. From 19 to 22 July, the Director of the Centre attended, at Yaoundé, a high-level seminar for the Central African subregion on the report of the Secretary-General on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa (S/1998/318). He delivered a speech at the meeting on behalf of the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs. Substantive deliberations at the Yaoundé meeting focused on the typology of conflicts and crises in Central Africa, the mechanism and mode of peaceful settlement of conflicts and crises, concrete measures of conflict prevention in Central Africa, peacemaking and peacekeeping in Central Africa, peace-building measures, promotion of humanitarian law, good governance, and sustainable development. The seminar was organized by the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa. The Director also attended the meeting of experts of the Standing Committee, held at Yaoundé on 21 and 22 July.

25. From 2 to 4 August, the Centre assisted the Department for Disarmament Affairs in organizing at Lomé a regional

workshop on illicit trafficking in small arms in Africa. The workshop was held pursuant to General Assembly resolution 53/77 T of 4 December 1998, in which the Assembly called upon the Secretary-General to hold broad-based consultations on the issue of illicit trafficking in small arms.

26. The workshop was opened by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Togo, Eugène Koffi Adoboli. The former Secretary-General of OAU and Head of the United Nations Advisory Mission on the Proliferation of Light Weapons in the Sahara-Sahel subregion, William A. Eteki-Mboumoua, also made opening remarks. The Director of the Centre delivered the welcoming address on behalf of the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs.

27. The workshop, which brought together delegates from African countries, and representatives of interested regional and subregional organizations, non-governmental organizations and relevant research institutions, offered the opportunity for three-day deliberations on: (a) the magnitude and scope of the phenomenon of illicit trafficking in small arms; (b) possible measures to combat illicit trafficking in and illicit circulation of small arms, including those suited to indigenous regional approaches; and (c) role of the United Nations in collecting, collating, sharing and disseminating information on illicit trafficking in small arms.

28. The Centre has also continued to distribute information materials on disarmament and related issues, published by the United Nations Secretariat and United Nations organizations.

29. Visitors to the Centre's headquarters were briefed on issues relating to peace and disarmament issues and received relevant information material. Delegations composed of political, diplomatic, academic and other leading personalities visited the Centre during the period under review.

30. The Centre's documentation and reference library continued to receive publications from within and outside the African region. It is widely visited by students and researchers. In order to increase the number of its documents, the Centre continued to establish relationships, based on exchange of documents, with research and academic institutions.

31. The Centre also initiated consultations with a number of African States with a view to implementing the relevant disarmament and security provisions and recommendations of the report of the Secretary-General on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa. In this regard, arrangements are under way to organize a workshop in the coming months on compliance with arms embargoes and practical ways and means of reducing defence budgets and maintaining a zero-growth on military expenditures over 10 years in Africa.

## IV. Staffing, financing and administration

32. Since December 1998, responsibility for the management of the Centre has been assumed by the new Director. Persistent financial constraints, however, do not allow the Centre to operate at full scale to implement its work programme. The functioning of the Centre is also hampered by the lack of resources to cover the operational costs. The Centre therefore continues to operate with a skeleton local staff at the General Service level.

33. The new Director of the Centre, upon his assumption of office, started fund-raising activities, visiting Austria, France, Germany, Japan, Norway, the Republic of Korea and the United States of America. Contacts were also made with the embassies of several donor countries at Lomé. To date, voluntary contributions in the amount of $34,685 have been received. In addition, the Government of Japan has contributed $50,000 in support of the activities of the Centre related to practical disarmament measures. The Secretary-General wishes to express his gratitude to the Governments of Italy, Japan, Norway and Sweden for their generous support and to the Government of Togo for its overall support of the Centre. Information on the status of the trust fund for the regional centre will be contained in an addendum to the present report.

34. Following discussion with the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany at Lomé on the Centre's project to launch the Fellowship on African Peace and Disarmament, the Government of Germany is considering making a voluntary contribution to the project.

35. Owing to the ongoing financial situation of the Centre, the Secretary-General strongly supports and reiterates the appeals made by the General Assembly to Member States, and governmental, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and individuals to provide voluntary contributions which would enable the effective and full operation of the Centre.